DOCUMENTARY film news

INCORPORATING DOCUMENTARY NEWS LETTER

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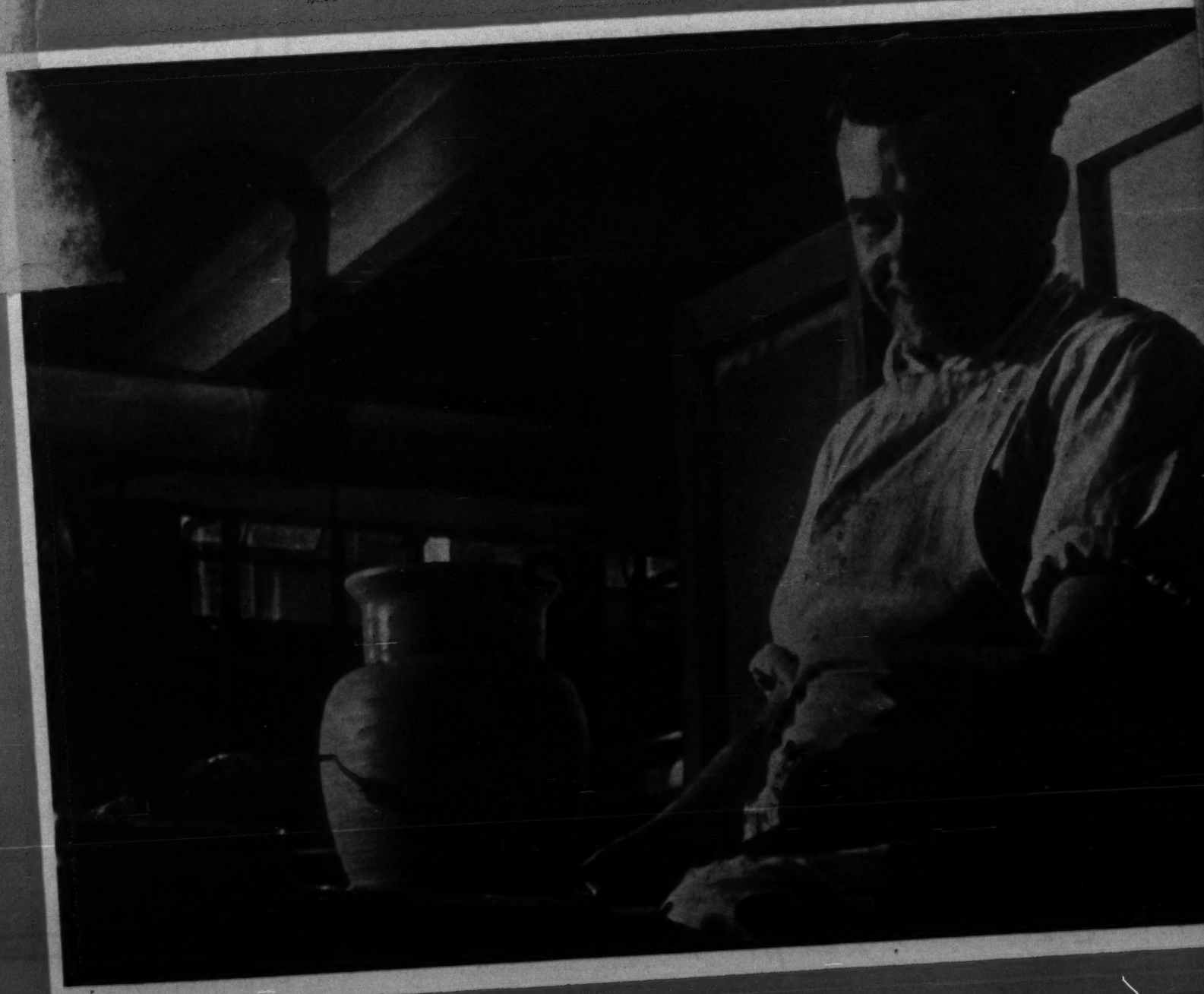

FORD

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FROM OUR INDEX OF PRODUCTIONS

UNDER A: AGRICULTURE:—*CLAMPING POTATOES* (M.O.I.), *CLEAN MILK* (M.O.I.), *CULTIVATION* (M.O.I.), *DITCHING* (M.O.I.), *FACTORS OF SOIL FERTILITY* (I.C.I.), *GARDEN TOOLS* (M.O.I.), *THE HARVEST SHALL COME* (I.C.I.), *HEDGING* (M.O.I.), *LAND DRAINAGE* (I.C.I.), *LIME* (I.C.I.), *MAKING GOOD HAY* (M.O.I.), *MAKING GRASS SILAGE* (M.O.I.), *POTATO BLIGHT* (M.O.I.), *RESEEDING FOR BETTER GRASS* (M.O.I.), *ROYAL SHOW* (SHELL), *SAVE YOUR OWN SEEDS* (M.O.I.), *SIMPLE FRUIT PRUNING* (M.O.I.), *SOIL NUTRIENTS* (I.C.I.), *STOOKING & STACKING* (M.O.I.), *STORING VEGETABLES INDOORS* (M.O.I.), *STORING VEGETABLES OUTDOORS* (M.O.I.), *WINTER WORK IN THE GARDEN* (M.O.I.).

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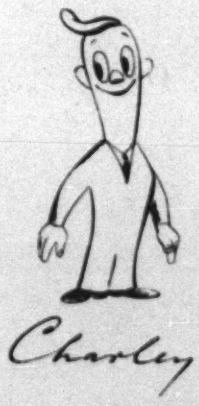

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OCUMENTARY *film news*

OL. 7 NO. 63 MARCH 1948

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MARCH MERRYWEATHER

THE FILMS BILL has proceeded in unspectacular fashion through the machinery of the House. In the Committee Stage members went solemnly through a tray full of amendments, showing in many cases a surprising grasp of the complex details of the industry. Most of the questions of substance they raised were, however, carefully headed off by an adroit move on the part of the President of the Board of Trade. When pressed to accept amendments designed to improve the marketing prospects for British films, he referred questioners to his proposed Committee of Inquiry into distribution and exhibition. There the matter was left to rest.

The outstanding aspect of the Bill so far has been the low temperature of the discussion both in the House and outside. Few heated exchanges have taken place on the floor, and there has been singularly little comment in the national Press. Those who remember the Bacon-Bogart diatribes of last year and more particularly the vast telegram campaigns organized by exhibitors at the time of the 1938 Act, expected much more flame than smoke.

In part the unsolved issue of the Import Tax must be held responsible for this tepid reception. Also it would seem one of those odd quirks of public interest which veers and changes with strange suddenness. At least the business of framing new legislation should have been much easier in consequence. But is the resulting Bill likely to be any more effective than the old Act?

The Bill, when first presented, was called by some unambitious and timid. What has happened in Committee Stage has not altered that impression. The President of the Board of Trade has had second thoughts about one or two points but none of them are major issues.

To give British producers protection against the overwhelming volume of American film imports is necessary, but by itself, not enough. Anyway at this very moment, when no American films are coming into the country, it is like building a rampart to keep out the sky. It is argued that protection is the sole purpose of these Films Bills and that it would be improper to extend their scope. But in fact the new Bill does touch on fresh issues affecting the wider operations of the industry. It legalizes the gentleman's agreement given by the three circuits several years ago to limit their further expansion. It incorporates the Board set up in October 1946 to select six independent feature films a year for circuit distribution. In other words, it admits that more is needed than mere protection against foreign imports. The chief criticism is that it does so little more, just at the time when prompt and effective action is needed to get British film-making out of its present crisis with studios idle and technicians unemployed. More and regular finance for production is one of the industry's main needs. A Government film finance corporation has been mooted for years: rumours are in the air once again, but are they to be taken seriously? The Report on Monopoly Tendencies in the industry showed that the whole distribution and exhibition side needs prompt attention and itself made a number of valuable recommendations. But that was over three years ago.

The new President of the Board of Trade has already shown a very considerable grasp of the film industry's thornier problems. But will he be able to break with the traditionally timid policies of his permanent officials? At the moment it happens that there is nothing for the Bill to protect British producers against. It would be more than ironical if the next move found the Government with nothing to protect.

NOTES OF THE MONTH

John Grierson

FOLLOWERS OF the documentary film will find a special logic in John Grierson's return to England at this time to oversee Government film-making. Britain's key position today in the world of economics and politics provides crucial tasks for the informational film-maker. Both in North America and later with UNESCO, John Grierson has during the past nine years made a signal contribution to the use and the development of the factual film. He returns to London to find in existence many of those things for which he pioneered in the early days of documentary—Government film-making centralized under a single agency, the State in possession of its own Film Unit. Yet few will claim that Government films are at present either fully effective as propaganda or even half satisfying as art. It is safe to assume that John Grierson will achieve lively improvement in both directions. And our guess is that he will begin by suggesting that instead of sitting in the dining-room and complaining about the food, the cooks should take off their coats and get to work in the kitchen.

*

Academic Honour

THE documentary film movement has not been openly honoured in the academic field during its brief—but not all that brief existence. We shall all, therefore, find an exceptional warmth of appreciation in the so well-merited honour done to John Grierson of the University of Glasgow, which has now invested him with an LL.D. In this action the University of Glasgow is doing much more than honouring one of its more electrifying alumni, it is in fact, honouring on a national and international scale, the untiring efforts of an exceptionally gifted and hard-working individual on behalf of a new, lively and constructive approach to civic education throughout the world. The only wonder is that the honour should be single and so belated. Certain other Universities—and not only in the British Isles—might ponder the implications.

*

The Cultural Needs of our People

ON February 19th while the Lords continued somewhat academically to debate the new Films Bill, the Commons passed an amendment to the Local Government Bill giving local authorities wide powers to provide entertainment of all kinds. For the first time they can set up theatres and run exhibitions and concerts and also their own cinemas and film shows. They can even provide their own bars! The revival of interest in the arts during the war showed how narrow had been the choice of entertainment provided commercially. Wise and imaginative use of their new powers by local authorities can spread enormously the cultural opportunities available in all parts of the country. This need is as great in films as it is in the other arts.

*

Religion and Films

THE first films to be made officially by the Church of England were shown privately on February 9th in London. They have been financed by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. The first, entitled *The Coming of the Light* was produced by the Rev G. L. Wheeler in consultation with the Production Committee of the Church of England Films Commission (which is being superseded by the new advisory Church of England Film Council with SPCK as its Executive Agency). The second film, entitled *Yo Inheritance*, was produced under the direct supervision of t Production Committee of the Commission.

Both films are primarily instructional and are designed to be us in conjunction with other modes of teaching, whether in hall or church.

The Coming of the Light is intended to be used in connection wi lectures and classes, for Youth or Further Study (Adult) purpos It employs topographical and diagrammatical sequences illustrate the history of the Church of England, from the earli times down to the sixth century. It is planned as the first in a ser of historical instructional films.

Your Inheritance is primarily intended for adult churchgoers. is meant to bring before them visually what the Church can me to them, and that the Church's life is in its members and not in stones.

It is hoped that the *DFN* Review Board will be able to see the films in the near future.

*

Shorts

Edinburgh this year hopes to beat last year's record. The Festiv of Documentary Films is to last three weeks—roughly fro August 22nd to September 7th. We hope to keep readers advis as to the plans for the Festival.

*

We hear from Evans Medical Supplies that their pharmaceuti film *Take Thou* has proved so popular that additional copies ha had to go into the Central Film Library.

*

Numbers 4, 5 and 6 of *This Modern Age* Series are now availab for the use of film societies on 16 mm. These three films are entitl *Fabrics of the Future*, *Thoroughbreds for the World*, and *Palesti* They may be hired from GB Film Library and our reviews of the will be found in *DNL*, Vol. 6, No. 56.

*

John Curthoys' PRODUCTIONS and Unicorn Head have mov to new and larger premises at 177 The Vale, Acton, London, W

*

Sub-standard exhibitors have formed a 16 *mm Film Exhibit Guild* with a temporary address at Whitehall Cine Service, 1 Whitehall Road, Bristol, 5. There is, apparently, some possibil that the CEA will not recognize such an organization.

*

James Madill of Glasgow has won first prize in the recent Cent Office of Information script writing competition—John Harp Nelson of London came second. Over 500 scripts were sent in fro all parts of the world.

*

Congratulations to COI for taking advantage of a week wh there were no new feature films for the Critics Circle to see. Th quickly organized a show of documentaries instead and invited the critics. Couldn't this be a regular practice?

*

rmany 1947

Summer in Peine

by

Graham Wallace

Graham Wallace is Director of 'KRO Germany 1947', a joint production of Crown Film Unit and Junge Film-Union, Hamburg. The film was issued as a monthly release for January, 1948, and is reviewed on page 31.

e is a small country town lying between over and Brunswick in the British Zone of many. The town and the surrounding dis- or Kreis had been selected as the location short documentary on Germany today. film dealt with the work of an English an officer working in the Control Com- ion for Germany—the Kreis Resident er. It was a monthly release for the COI was intended to show something of the of an individual in the CCG and of life conditions in Germany.

fe in Peine is typical, on a small scale, of all over Germany. Here we find all the lems of the Black Market, shortages of ing and food, overcrowded accommoda- idle factories and refugees that were the ern of the central character of our film— Kreis Resident Officer.

e production unit making the film was a d one, with English and German techni- working together. The director and unit ager came from the Crown Film Unit; the eraman, his assistant, editor, electricians, duction manager, script girl and sound tech- ns came from the Junge Film-Union of burg. Our film was a joint production of e two units.

was late in August when we arrived in e to start shooting our film. It was some- g of an experiment for a mixed crew of lish and German technicians to work to- er on a film. We did not know how it would out. At first we were stiff and strange to- ds each other, living together in a German l, with the language barrier preventing ual understanding. After a few days, when barrier of nationality had been dropped, we me a team of technicians working together to make a film, conversing in a mixture of bad English and guide-book German, with the exception of the cameraman who claimed to speak five languages fluently and certainly had good English.

The concept of a straightforward factual documentary film dealing with real people and their daily work was foreign to the German technicians. Their Dokumentarfilm and Kulturfilm production consisted for the main part of excellent instructional films or pretty studies of 'Spring in an Alpine Valley' and other well-worn themes. To take a camera and lights into a small hall packed with truculent refugees from the East was a new experience for the German technicians. They had to be convinced that it was not necessary to engage an actor for every part in the script. Once our technique was understood, they willingly fell in with the straightforward presentation of our theme, without undue elaboration.

Shooting a film in Germany is very much harder than working under the most trying conditions in England. There is an almost total shortage of film-making material and equipment and there is the personal problem. The first thought of every German technician is food. Like everyone else in Germany, they are strictly rationed on a low level, though they are entitled to draw heavy workers' rations. Even these, by English standards, are meagre indeed. Of course the English members of the unit were able to help out with part of their rations. By our present-day standards German technicians are poorly paid, but their wages are settled by the German administration. Much of their salary went to buying extra food. Transport is difficult for Germans. We had to wait five or six days before the camera assistant and electrician could get a permit to leave Berlin and travel on the interzonal train to join the unit in Peine. Local transport in the way of a car or lorry was almost unobtainable; at one time we transported our lights through the streets of Peine on a horse-drawn cart!

We had brought with us as much as possible from England. All our stock, both negative and positive, bulbs for the lamps and all the oddments like camera tape, empty tins, chalk, black paper and Windowlite—all unobtainable in Germany.

Our worst headache proved to be the processing of our film. We had decided to have it processed out in Germany rather than go to the trouble of flying it back to England and then sending it back to Germany for viewing and editing. Our experience showed that this would have been the easiest and quickest course to follow. There are several laboratories working in the British Zone, but they are small and improvised establishments, possessing only one machine for developing and printing. They are subject to frequent current cuts and cannot work for days at a time, until there is a guarantee of current being available for long enough to run a roll of film through the bath. During our twenty days of shooting we had only seen one small batch of rushes, though we had been promised a five-day delivery period. After the shooting was finished we found all our material lying untouched in the laboratory, with many excuses for the delay in processing. In desperation we sent it all to a laboratory in Berlin and were able to view our rushes a week after the completion of shooting!

When shooting interiors we ran our lamps off the local electricity supply. This was never constant for more than a few consecutive minutes. All the members of the unit had to stand by the lamps ready to move them forwards or backwards with the voltage fluctuations. The cameraman could never put his light meter down for a minute, but had to be continually checking and rechecking the light so that we could have it constant for long enough to do a 'take'.

From the people of Peine we had many varied reactions to our shooting in their town. In general they were helpful and generous with their time, but there were exceptions. There was the Burgomeister of the town. At first he willingly consented to appear in the film. Later on, when required for some retakes, he was most reluctant to appear. Apparently he had been accused by his colleagues on the Council of undue 'collaboration' with the English and he was fearful for his re-election at the forthcoming municipal elections. Then there were the refugees in a school hall; three hundred of them living together in cramped quarters, sleeping on straw on the floor. They regarded our operations as a put-up propaganda job by the English and demanded to know what we are going to do about sending them back home or giving them proper accommodation.

Again and again we received great help and

(Continued foot column 1 page 29)

This still from *KRO Germany 1947* is reproduced from COI's Monthly Review of January by permission of the Controller of His Majesty's Stationery Office

O Canada! We stand on guard for thee

To the Seven-Headed Board of Review of DFN

by John Grierson

SIRS: When you set up that Reviewing Panel, I had my doubts as to how you would fare if some of your less composite selves got the gang into a judgment that was seriously challenged. This, so to speak, is it. If you tell me your composite self has no body to be burned, and no soul to be damned, you had better listen a moment, for I am going to have a shot at both.

I am concerned, if you please, with the page of criticisms on recent Canadian films in your January issue. I am concerned for two reasons. The first is that I was once associated with the National Film Board in a local, more or less Red Indian capacity, and have a regard for the people who work there, and I could not believe on the face of it that they were as bad as you compositely, or uncompositely, said they were. The second reason is that I went to see four of the seven films you reviewed and now say quite simply, for what it is worth, that your criticism was thoughtless, and from any serious point of view, either in documentary leadership or documentary criticism, inadequate.

Here is a group of films all coming from a not unnotable unit. There are people like McLean, Beveridge, Jackson, Blackburn, Applebaum, Weisenborn, Budge Crawley, not to mention Stuart Legg, around, and they are all pretty good people with a good sense of documentary and, shall we say, a certain measure of taste, and yet *DFN* cannot find a good word to say for any one of seven of their films. This one *Broncho Busters* is 'just a programme filler', *Tomorrow's Citizens* 'purports to examine' this and that and 'suffers from severe indigestion' and is 'slick, shallow and smug' (just hark at them, Stuart!), and 'does not succeed'. Another one 'falls from the frying pan of dullness into the fire of obscurity'. *Montreal by Night* is yet another 'programme filler'. *Condition Improved*, which is about occupational therapy, save the mark, was no great good because 'it may be questioned whether such a survey which consists essentially of linked examples is really the most convincing approach to the subject'.

For good measure, there is a certain sniffing at the NFB information sheets as though your august composite Panel was not concerned in reviewing the films but in reviewing the good old hooey which goes with publicity sheets the world over.

I have in my time kicked some films around, but I doubt if I ever was totally sore about seven in a row and when I see seven good men and true being sore about seven in a row I find it quite a phenomenon. I even doubt if it is possible, either in good criticism or good manners.

Good manners we shall leave aside, except to say that the Canadian boys can be articulate too, and it does nobody any good to be superior, and start a slanging match over each other's films which no one can win. Who, for example, is anyone in documentary to talk about a 'mere programme filler' when so many of the damn things don't even manage to hit a theatre programme? Whatever their virtues or failings, the Canadian films referred to did manage to do just that.

As for good criticism, I would say, in general, that one element of it is to say what is good as well as what is bad and it is only the tyro who finds a warming virtue in the continuing negative. But let us take them one at a time remembering that, of the films mentioned, *Tomorrow's Citizens* and *Montreal by Night* were made for theatre showing and the ten-minute attention of a mass audience.

I see that *Bronco Busters*, in a snappy innuendo, is described as 'static' and only moves because it happens that there are some fast horses and dogies in and around. It is, moreover, a 'pretty ordinary piece of film-making which could have been made anywhere on the North American continent'. Here is one reviewer who says the picture is fast and that it is the best rodeo item, with more working detail, that has come along in a long while and that it will certainly excite the children everywhere. For my money, I would have liked to see more of the Royal Show aspect of the Calgary Stampede, with the big Herefords in from the foothills, but the atmosphere is good and ordinary Calgary and nowhere else I assure you, and not without a certain reference back to windbreaks and sundry other aspects of progressive farming which I thought moderately thoughtful on the part of somebody.

Maybe it is true that the local idiom in Canada is a trifle corny, but whose local idiom is not, if you follow my meaning? I'd say that here often is fast and sensitive camera-work and good reportage in anyone's language: of the boys from the farm showing their paces at a local agricultural show in the shadow of the Rockies. The film looks it and it is and does not pretend to do any more. When did I last see a film as good about the Bath Show?

Tomorrow's Citizens is another, more serious matter altogether. The task was to produce a serious film editorial for theatres on a wo subject: in ten-minute length. To my kn ledge, it had never been done before and rep sented an experiment which was important all of us. I have, myself, been so technic interested in the problem that I must have s the film seven or eight times. Your review d not seem to be even conscious that in seein ten-minute theatre discussion of educatio principle and ideology, it was seeing a very bird indeed, not to mention a very literate count of the ever-recurring gap between te nological progress and educational substan

There could be a deal of argument about formula used. My own complaint is that film proceeds too much by assertion and little by easy illumination; but, I'm damne I can see at this stage how a one-reel edito form can do otherwise, any more than the s tened editorial forms of, say, the *New Y Daily News*.

The tabloid shape tends to a propaga shape and it is true that *Tomorrow's Citi* hits you on the head and is done with it. when your review talks of 'biting off more t it can chew' and being 'slick, shallow and s this, too, is proceeding by assertion and wi vengeance. In my view, it is not 'shallow' cause it does in fact raise what has been on the profoundest problems before educa since Marx first posed it in the *Poverty Philosophy* a hundred years ago. Nor is a 'slick and smug' which goes to the pains of ting the subject within a world framew which includes Fundamental Education an the courtesy of including an almost incred variety of international illustration.

I would have thought, among other thi that a film which attempted to describe British documentary school's theory of 'b ing the world alive to the citizen' was worth greater consideration. That apart, I would tainly have expected a professional journa take note of the superb use of sound to and punctuate the narration, the extraordi economy and integration achieved by the velopment of visual metaphor, and the editorial violence of, say, cutting 'the pr study of mankind is man' into the baby ch ing to death after Hiroshima.

However these one-reel editorials devel and we shall hit the theatres everywhere i can develop them simply, clearly and dram ally—here, I suggest, is an object lesson in a pioneer effort involves in the matter of nique. It should not have been missed as if only to develop the appropriate argu and clear the ground for further effort.

I shall say less of *Montreal by Night*, i is, as you say, 'a modest little film', but please are you so rattled that, having litt say for the film itself, you dive into th

(Continued on page 35)

Overseas

Progress in Brazil

by

Brian Strange

BRAZILIAN documentary the chief source of spiration has been Professor Roquete Pinto, eminent scientist, man of letters and above a pioneer in the development of the 'mass dia', both of film and radio. As early as 1910 established the first film library in the tional Museum and later placed in it the umentary records of research carried out in interior of Brazil by the Rondon Commis-n. As in most other countries it was not until n-inflammable 16 mm stock became avail-e that there was any general appreciation of possibilities of using films in the classroom. 1933 the educational authorities of the deral District were making arrangements for n distribution to schools in the area around de Janeiro, but several more years had to pse before an attempt was made by the cen-l government to organize this service on a ional plane. Then, in January, 1937, the sident authorized the establishment of the tituto Nacional de Cinema Educativo with-the framework of the re-constituted Ministry Education. Roquete Pinto was appointed its t Director and held this post until March, 7. The terms of reference of this new de-rtment were that it should supervise and pro-te the use of cinematography, both as an aid nstruction in schools and also in the wider d of public enlightenment. To this end it was ipped to produce films (16 mm for schools d 35 mm for public cinemas), to distribute m on request throughout Brazil, and in eral to act as an information centre. Tech-al advice and copying facilities were to be plied to any privately-owned film unit, pro-ed that its productions could be classed as cational.

The INCE under the supervision of its preparatory commission had in fact already produced 32 films, with subjects ranging from the celebration of a national holiday to the preparation of vaccine against rabies. By the end of 1946 a total of 306 had been made available for issue, 235 in 16 mm (mostly silent) and the remainder in 35 mm sound. In addition, 233 16 mm and 117 35 mm films had been acquired from various outside sources, by purchase or presentation: but reference to the catalogue reveals that these are not all strictly educational and include Felix and Mickey Mouse cartoons. The rate of INCE production has slowed up in recent years, probably owing to the fact that the financial grant from the Ministry of Education has been considerably reduced, and also because of an acute shortage of 16 mm film stock; this resulted in only three 16 mm and six 35 mm films being issued for 1946. It is somewhat difficult to sort out and classify the INCE's own work under the usual headings. There are a good many medical films, most of which I think were made in collaboration with the University of Sao Paulo, and again there seem to be a certain number definitely designed for use in technical schools. But apart from such specialist material, the natural tendency has been to choose subjects which particularly relate to Brazil itself—its fauna and flora, its industries, places of interest, the lives of famous men of letters and science, and studies of national institutions. For instance, plans for the future include a series of documentaries dealing with the various types of farms and plantations throughout the country. On the whole, the idea seems to have been to produce not so much the instructional type of film as one which would give a general picture of background information, in such a way as to appeal to a wide range of audience. Perhaps because of this general approach, I sometimes had the impression that there had been insufficient certainty as to the purpose and direction of a film; although it is hardly fair to judge by the limited number that I have seen. Technically, these were still a little rough and uneven in quality, with flashes of genius in direction and photography all too often dimmed by lack of professional polish. Also, there seemed to be a tendency to allow the eye of the camera to be diverted from the argument by considerations purely aesthetic and to wander off taking pretty pictures at random (an easy matter in Brazil).

As for distribution, the 300-odd schools in Brazil which possess projectors order their films direct or via their representatives in Rio; otherwise, where the distance is not too great, the INCE can send a machine from its own pool. In 1946 there were 553 film-shows given in schools all over the country. At the same time teachers are efficiently provided with the latest information by D. Hilda Smith de Vasconcellos, who is in charge of the library originally founded with 600 books from Roquete Pinto's own collection and now containing over 2,800 titles. While a large percentage of this total consists of general reference books for the use of documentary workers, the specialist sections dealing with film history, production, criticism, etc., are remarkably full and include most of the standard classics, from the works of Pudovkin to *The Factual Film*. Among the periodicals, mostly North American, I noticed copies of *La Cinematographie Francaise* and *Sight and Sound*.

The whole organization is now directed by the able and charming Dr Pedro Gouveia Filho, supported by Sr Humberto Mauro as chief technician and an enthusiastic staff. It is to be hoped that before long some of these pioneer workers will be able to visit documentary units in Great Britain, and that in the near future we shall see some of the INCE's productions at an International Festival.

(*Continued from page* 27)

endship from the people of Peine who ap-ciated what we were trying to do. They felt ongly the lack of mutual information about r two countries and if our little film would in y way help to promote an understanding of rman problems in England, then they were ite willing to help. The fact that English and rman technicians were working together to ke the film helped a great deal, though it oused deep suspicion in the minds of the Rus-ns guarding the frontier between the two nes when we were shooting there. This was r only serious antagonism, otherwise we ght well have been making a film in the Eng-h countryside, instead of in Occupied Ger-ny.

And when the shooting was finished and the it broke up, the two English technicians had much deeper insight and understanding of rmany today and the difficulties under which e German technicians work. The German hnicians, too, had learnt something of the glish tradition of documentary film produc-n and later the cameraman was able to visit gland for two weeks to study our methods at st hand.

A still from *Rhodesia—Is this your Country?* which will be reviewed in the April issue

FILMS OF THE MONTH

★ International

Voices of Malaya. Crown for Colonial Office through COI. *Made by:* Ralph Elton and Terry Trench. *Photography:* Denny Densham. *Commentary:* V. S. Pritchett. *Music:* Elizabeth Lutyens. *Unit Manager:* Eric Hudson. *Assistant Directors:* Clive Freedman, Yussef Khan, Lee Meow Seong. *Assistant Camera:* Osman Bin Sansubin. *Sound:* Red Law, Jock May. *Sound Editor:* Jean MacKenzie. *Assistant Editor:* Paul Shortall.

'Orang-wayang-gelap' — maker-of-shadow-shows. Years ago, a former co-operative organizer from Malaya so described me on the fly-leaf of a book he had written. I hereby formally renounce all claim to the title in favour of the man who has really earned it—Ralph Elton, with his new film, *Voices of Malaya.*

Let me not be misunderstood. The title was a high compliment, and Elton deserves it. So does Terry Trench, who edited his way through the mass of material Elton shot. *Voices of Malaya* has been made by a team gifted with what a student in another film, not yet completed, describes as 'the cosmological eye'—the capacity to look out beyond the windows of Government office and film studio and comfortable Englishman's castle to the red, yellow and black men and women who mostly people this world in the process of rebirth, and, rare gift, to understand without patronizing them.

In the first minute or two, I was not sure. Five races of Malaya—*Five Faces*—perhaps it was only to be another enlightened travelogue. Alexander Shaw, who was there ten years before Elton, and who made that film, will, I think understand and not be offended. But, even in these sequences, once the Sakai had been disposed of, without too many drumtaps or dances, there already began to be a difference. Each new race came visually, by boat, and did not depend for their introduction on the words. And the words themselves, freed from the necessity of being obvious, were expressing so much that was vigorous and unembarrassed. In the Malay sequence there was an uncommented shot looking at first high up a palm-tree from its base to a monkey shinning down towards us, and then tilting down the whole tremendous length with the beast until he reached the Malay waiting for coconuts at the bottom. (Denny Densham, by the way, has done a job of photography on this film, which puts him well up in the ranking list of documentary cameramen.) That shot was so memorable, that, although no words covered it, enormous weight was carried over into the speech of the ambitious Chinaman, hundreds of feet later, who explained that his people did not wait at the bottom of trees for coconuts, but sent the whole family up to fetch them down.

So, on to the Europeans, and to the Indians who flocked from their own overcrowded country into rich Malaya to work for them. Shots of railway engines and factories, and a cynically written commentary, spoken with fruity self-satisfaction, to explain the value to Malaya of Western progress. *Volte-face* again: after twisting the tails of his countrymen, Elton is mature enough to give them full credit for their hospitals and their schools. Singapore spreads across the screen, and we recognize it fairly for that mixture of the very good and the very bad that is every modern city.

And then, suddenly, visually, Singapore is smashed, and we are pitchforked into the middle of one of the very few intelligent reports that have reached us from those countries where the war was a matter of solid oppression by alien armies of occupation, instead of only a question, however terrifying, of bombs and threatened invasion. I remember particularly the Japanese officer at his tidy desk being served so decorously with tea in a dainty cup, remember it perhaps mainly because of the contrast, after the ultimate victory, of the English officer sitting at the same desk, now cluttered with bumph, swilling tea from a gigantic mug, and settling down, for want of a secretary, to thump away at his typewriter over the fade-out. That's maybe not a very important example of Elton's reportage, but it will serve as a proof of how far he has managed to get from reliance on mere words. Wait for the aftermath, the skeleton who might be man, woman or boy, lying not as a dead still-life on the pavement, but living and enjoying the cigarette which somebody is lighting for him, and you will see what I mean. Of course, there isn't enough of it, there never is, but very few shots are wasted, and the sum total is somewhere near the journalistic impossibility of making what happened in Malaya, and the quality of the people who live there, at least as real as, say, the story of France between 1939 and 1944, and as sympathetic

Voices of Malaya

the members of the French Resistance.

The film doesn't end very well. Who *can* e such a film well nowadays, when the best t can be said is that the five races are at le settling down with equal rights of citizensh and trying to make a go of it? I think I shou have finished more quickly, and got out of t difficulty that way, but, after all, it was n Elton's fault that Indonesia was only just acr the road, so to speak, and that fact prevent him from drawing parallels. His film deser the widest possible theatrical showing, and if renters want it shortened, well at least he h left himself a convenient way of pacifying the

★ Industrial

Five Towns. Greenpark for Board of Tra through COI. *Producer:* Ralph Keene. *Direct* Terry Bishop. *Associate Producer:* Paul Fletch *Camera:* Ray Elton. *Additional Photography:* Amsor. *Story:* Randall Swinger. *Editor:* Pe Tanner. *Music:* Guy Warrack. *Distributi* Theatrical at present—later non-T. CFL. *minutes.*

To anyone who has never been to the Po teries, nor into a works devoted (this verb sprin to mind after having seen the film) to the maki of china, *Five Towns* will give a rounded a essentially human account of that craft. A what a craft it is! There is no more lovely n satisfying industrial sight than the master-pott creating a sharply intelligent vase out of t dullard lump of wet clay on his wheel: and it to the credit of the director that we are allowe

Five Towns

see practically the whole process. As the clay ins and is deftly moulded, the audience can se the generations of craftsmen behind the tter's eager, firm and restless fingers. Here is de in work—and work to be proud of. This atmosphere of pride, this sense of craftsnship, pervades the whole film: an impression couraged by the personalized treatment of the ry and the warm handling of the characters in whether they be members of the family whose stence in the film knits together the various ttery processes, or chance workers in the facies. This relating of a general theme to a perhal story, which, judging by the films to be n that essay it, is an extremely difficult thing do, in *Five Towns* is almost entirely successful. e people appear real and ordinary, their surndings genuine, and the story simple (it ntres round the arrival of a bride-to-be from ndon, to whom the Potteries were as much of ystery as to the reviewer). Terry Bishop keeps h the family story, and the larger canvas of Potteries, human and clear, while revealing processes themselves with an adroitly fluid nera in a manner which maintains their fasation to the layman and builds up to the exng climax of the potter and his vase. These tory processes have been admirably photophed in a lustre-full 'high-key' style, which kes the most of china's three dimensions and erfully airs the more modern works. The logue is understandable, for it avoids the 'pit- of heavy dialect—so often mistakenly walved in by documentary in superficial search of racter: although audience-interest in local ech is recognized by a glimpse of rich 'Potteryk'. Altogether, the film is a polished piece of rk which it is a pleasure to see for its own sake well as for the information it contains. If the tain be lifted occasionally to reveal some procts of the Potteries that are both hideous and less—notably some terrifying china baskets of wers—that is a very proper revelation for a n to make. Some will be disappointed that *Five Towns* is a more penetrating social study. We learn thing of occupational diseases, rates of pay,

(*Continued on page* 35, *col.* 3)

NEW FILMS

Your Children's Meals. Made by Realist Film Unit for the Ministry of Health through COI. *Producer*: John Taylor. *Director/Camera*: Alex Strasser. *Music*: Horace Somerville. *Camera operator*: Fred Moore. *Editor*: Cliff Boote. *Distribution*: non-T; 16 and 35. 15 *minutes*.

One of the now famous 'Your Children's' series in which the Realist Film Unit and the Ministry of Health have collaborated so successfully, this is not, as you might imagine, a factual survey of child dietetics, but a lively and imaginative attempt to make parents understand the rhyme and reason of good feeding habits.

In a series of incidents the film makes points about such things as fussy or 'difficult' feeders, the need for attractive food, children's liking for company, the need for regular meal times, etc. Children are such individual animals that it is difficult to generalize about them; inevitably one is left with doubts about some of the advice given—for example that parents should conceal their own food likes and dislikes. But the idea of the film is not, presumably, to provide ready made solutions to every situation but to make parents think about the problems of feeding from the child's point of view as well as their own, and in this it should be successful. Well directed, the film is notable for an ingenious use of sound and visual effects.

KRO Germany 1947. COI Monthly Release made by Crown Film Unit. *Director*: Graham Wallace. *Camera*: Arndt von Rautenfeld.

This is a film which tells the story of the work of a Kreis Resident Officer—a Kreis being one of the sections into which the British Zone of Germany is divided for administrative purposes. Quietly, as we follow the KRO through a typical day, the film shows the difficulties; the ruins, the refugees, lack of houses and food, shortages of every kind, the hoarders and the smugglers. Somehow these have to be coped with—and to the best of his ability the KRO copes.

To make a film about Germany with a joint team of British and German technicians and to make it a COI monthly release must have been a brave decision; for there are few subjects that arouse such conflicting emotions as the treatment of Germany today. Germany is destitute but the Germans brought misery to millions and might do so again if they had the chance; can we on that account remain indifferent to their present suffering? KRO presents the facts, it offers no comment. To have made a film which steers its way between the Scylla and Charybdis of pity and hatred, and which holds the attention throughout, is a considerable achievement.

Some of the difficulties of international collaboration which were overcome in the production of KRO are described in an article elsewhere in this issue; it only remains to add that no one seeing the film would have suspected them. Unanimously the Reviewing Board had only one grouse; what happened when the KRO went out after the smugglers, and what happened in his court next day? Many documentaries are too long. This one is too short.

Report on Industrial Scotland. Crown for COI. *Directed, written and edited* by A. S. Graham. *Distribution*: T. to Non-T. 10 *minutes*.

This is the third in a series (*Report on Coal*, *Report on Electricity*) which has a similar aim to radio's *Progress Report*. Incidentally, for the record, Crown were two months ahead of the BBC. The issue under review deals with industrial development in the central belt of Scotland, stretching from Glasgow to Edinburgh. Sixty thousand people have emigrated from the area since VE day, and, in an endeavour to halt this drain on manpower, new factories are being built, with an emphasis on light engineering and on jobs which can be done by women.

The difficulty of compressing this story into ten minutes has not been entirely overcome. Consequently, the treatment seems hurried and rather confused: we are left with an impression of great activity, but with little understanding of the problems, and, therefore, of how far this activity is likely to solve them. Partly, this is the fault of the commentary: delivery is fresh and interesting, but somehow the voice just lacks sureness and authority.

But, whatever its teething troubles on questions of presentation, this series is to be warmly welcomed. It is tackling an urgent and important job, and a few more films like it would enable us to feel that Government information was beginning to live up to the needs of the country's situation.

Overseas Trade. World Wide for Banking Information Services in association with Film Centre. *Producer:* Ralph Bond. *Director:* Charles de Lautour. *Camera:* Geoffrey Williams. *Commentary:* Robert MacDermott. *Distribution:* Non-T. 20 *minutes*.

An attempt to explain to the uninitiated the mysteries of international currency exchange. A purely undramatized film which tells how something works or anything is done can always have its uses. This film does not strike one as very satisfactory in this respect—its handling is clumsy and its whole conception muddled. One feels that the subject, potentially fascinating, deserves a more inspired treatment. This film will fill a gap until a better one is made.

Nationalism and Internationalism

by R. E. Whitehall

THE first International Film Workers' Congress, held in Czechoslovakia during 1947, passed a resolution reading:

> Screen art is the most universal and lively medium of expression and spreads human knowledge and all artistic and social aspirations of the people. It is most democratic by nature, and a most remarkable instrument for bringing nations nearer to one another, and promoting a new feeling of common responsibility which will bring peace to the world.

That nation can only speak peace unto nation when the barriers of racial hatred and rabid nationalism have been swept away is only too true; that the cinema is the most potent medium to do it is obvious; that the cinema has been, and still is, grossly misused for this purpose is only too evident.

The driving force behind most films being made now is still hatred, and hatred is the festering sore in which the microbes of war germinate. That the countries of Europe should make films dealing with national hatreds was only to be expected, but that former allies should now indulge in name-calling through the medium of the cinema while their statesmen chant bitter and uncontrolled psalms of hatred in the world's councils is a disheartening spectacle.

It is not without interest that the annual report of the American Civil Liberties Union, issued just before the notorious Committee of Un-American Activities investigation opened, recorded that progress in the basic freedoms had been halted during 1947, and that hardening of feeling in the States towards Communism had been reflected in the suspicion with which progressive measures and opinions had been greeted.

This feeling, running at times into the high hysteria unparalleled since the Bolshevik scare of 1920, has been crystallized by the Hollywood probe, and the ideas—ranging from innocuous to mildly Socialist—which may get one branded as a Communist, a crypto-Communist, or a fellow-traveller, have been dragged into the open.

Fortunately for Hollywood, at almost the same time Mr Dore Schary, vice-president of RKO-Radio, was writing, with regard to his production of *Crossfire*, that if the cinema reverts to the 'sedative function' it will stagnate.

Crossfire is the first of a series of films in which racial prejudice comes under devastating attack, with its outspoken criticisms of the bigotry characterizing relationships between Gentile and Jew.

Unfortunately Hollywood has not yet attempted to combat or abandon the stereotyped characterizations of coloured people in its films—the 'mammy' smiling all over her lovable old face, the 'comic relief' terrified of the darkness or the elements—the implied statement that coloured people should be relegated to inferior social positions. These things constitute a restatement of the exploded theory of race as surely as any of the films from Nazi Germany did.

Meanwhile, from Moscow, come reports of anti-British or anti-American sentiments in new Soviet productions. *The Battle for Stalingrad* supports the view that the Western Powers waited until Russia had sufficiently weakened German military might before invading Western Europe. *Admiral Nakhimov*, a biography of the defender of Sebastopol in 1853, is not notably conciliatory in its picturing of the British, although in this particular instance there would be as little use in suppressing the conflict of Britain and Russia as there would be in suppressing the conflict of Britain and France in the screen version of *Henry V*.

Unfortunately the inopportune time of appearance, and the fact that the ideological content is in line with the official propaganda must place *Admiral Nakhimov* on the list of those films which are not likely to spread knowledge and understanding of fundamental problems, or create international goodwill.

In Britain producers are too busily engaged on other things to worry about the ideological war being conducted through the medium of the screen elsewhere. If Britain has no *Iron Curtains* or *Soviet Spies* (subjects announced by American companies) in immediate prospect, she has n constructive ideas either, with the possible e ception of Paul Rotha's 40-minute documentary *The World is Rich*, which, on being shown to th representatives of forty-eight nations and eigh teen international organizations at the Food an Agriculture Conference in Geneva, was called b Sir John Boyd Orr, 'this superb contribution t international understanding'.

It has been left to the smaller European cou tries to make the most valuable contribution t the cause of international amity. Switzerlan with *The Last Chance*, and Italy with a series o beautifully conceived productions, beginnin with *Open City*. This film, in which Robert Rosselini believed so implicitly that he pawne many of his personal belongings in order to com plete, is not an expression of hatred, it is n 'anti' in any factional sense but a drama, rathe of the eternal conflict between the good and ev in men. Perhaps this is because the film is base so very closely on life, with each of its chief pro tagonists—the priest, the underground leade the Gestapo chief—being taken from real life.

Vivere en Pace goes even further, in that it ca look at the immediate past without bitterne There is no hatred for the Germans, rather a pi for the shambling little man who is left in th Italian mountain village as a symbol of th 'herrenvolk'. There is good and evil in all me and all nations, and the Italians, out of all th film-making nations, seem to be the only on capable of accepting it.

If the promotion of international understan ing, with its ghastly alternative, depended o such films as *Mrs Miniver* or *Song of Russ* both frequently cited as examples of films ma for the specific purpose of familiarizing o group of people with the problems of anothe then the cause would be hopeless, but the Italia have demonstrated that the screen is the fine medium for the propagation of peace and justi in this one world.

DFN COMPETITIONS

RESULT OF COMPETITION No. 1

THE spirit of Elizabethan days is not very easy to capture, but competitors have worked hard and sent in many excellent entries. One of the cleverest came from France and took the form of quotations—it was an ingenious idea but did not quite keep to the terms of reference. Francis Bacon, Marlow, Hayluyt, Shakespeare and Raleigh were the most popular script-writers. Particularly good was '*The Uses of Shepherdesses*: an important contribution to the increase of productivity in Rural Areas: by Nick Breton', and we must also mention '*Players Please* by W. Shakespeare: a film to encourage the tobacco trade'.

It has been difficult to select the winning entries, but first prize finally goes to John Shearman, Basic Films, 18 Soho Square, W1, partly for his excellent Elizabethan English and partly because he seems best to have translated our Central Office of Information into Elizabeth's Privy Council.

A good second is 'Swiss' who is especially to be commended for being short, sharp and to the point.

First prize

ELIZABETH REGINA

PRIVY COUNCIL FYLMS D'VYSION

Programme of Fylms Destyned for Producti in ye Fynancial Year of Our Blessyd Lord 1588

For Ye War Office

THUNDER OF YE HARQUEBUS

Ye passyinge of ye Longbowe and yts repla ment by firearms of divers kinds as weapons Hyr Majestie's Soldiers and Militiamen.

Scrypt: CHRISTOPHER MARL

For Ye Admiralty

MEN OF THE FIRESHIP

With a synchronized yntroductorie discourse The Lord Howard of Effingham.

Scrypt: RICHARD HAKL

For Ye Board of Trade

YE SMOAKINGE OF YE POTATO ROOT

An account of ye advantages to be gained the Queen's subjects at hoame from Trade bey the Seas, especially with ye Neu Disco Virginias.

Scrypt: SIR W. RAL

(Continued on page 35, col. 3)

or Ye Ministry of Health
STAKE, RACK AND BLOCK
hyr use against the Diseases Politick of our yme, together with Remedial Action where pplicable.
Scrypt and Technical Advysor: J. KETCH

or Ye Ministry of Agriculture
YE BACON CONTROVERSIE
rom a Treatment by Wm. Shakespeare.
Scrypt: FRANCIS BACON

or Ye Ministry of Education
THE QUEEN WE LOVE
Trybute to Hyr Sovran Majestie GLORIANA
r Ruler and Royal Mistress.
nceived and Executed by ROBERT DEVEREAUX, EARLE OF ESSEX
iven at our Palace of Nonsuch, 1588.
John Shearman
econd prize

ar Office
Doe Not Let's Be Beastlye to the Spaniards—
SHAKESPEARE
dmiralty
Goe West, Young Man RALEIGH
oard of Trade
The Guild Must Goe FLETCHER
ealth
Pox 1588 JONSON
griculture
Doe Not Fence Me In BACON
ducation
The Worlde is Round HACKLUYT
Nom de Plume: Swiss

DFN COMPETITION No. 3

he usual prizes are offered for a letter (not over 00 words) to a kindly but inquisitive aunt who ants to know how documentary films differ om other films. Competitors should remember at the word 'documentary' has been applied almost every kind of film from the abstract artoon to features like *The Grapes of Wrath*. Entries should reach the Editor before April st. Results will appear in the May issue.

NEWS FROM UNITED NATIONS

T THE second Regular Session of the United Nations in 1947 the budget of the UN Department of Public Information for 1948 was drastically cut at the instance of Britain, USA and USSR. It was decided that Visual Information should suffer most in view of the high cost of its material and manufacture and the 1948 films programme was, therefore, completely abandoned. UN are now hoping that governments and private companies will make the necessary films at their own expense—UN will willingly assist with information and library material but cannot offer any financial aid.

Films from the 1947 programme will be distributed throughout 1948 so that the gap in production will not be felt until next year. *The People's Charter* is the only UN film available here to date and it is having excellent bookings through CFL. The next one, *Searchlight on the Nations*, will shortly be available for theatrical distribution.

A Technician at a Conference

THE PROFESSIONAL scientific film-maker who attended the Scientific Film Association's Conference on Films in Agriculture on January 17th, came away feeling about as low as a sheep's stomach worm. He went there hoping to learn something and more or less prepared to be told how to do his job by agricultural experts who would undoubtedly throw him head-first into the midden if he tried to tell them how to run their farms. His expectations were more than fulfilled. He and his colleagues, a decent and hard-working lot on the whole, were accused:

(1) of making the changes between scenes too quick (boy, order up a 48 frame cut from scene 127 to scene 128); (2) of choosing commentators with (*a*) Oxford, (*b*) other university, (*c*) local, (*d*) non-local, (*e*) unintelligible, and (*f*) non-Scottish accents, none of which are acceptable to the farming audience; (3) of panning the camera too little, but (4) of paying too much attention to camera work and general technique; (5) of including (*a*) too much and (*b*) too little veterinary detail; and (6) of making films for specialized audiences which are unsuitable for totally different audiences. In addition he was urged to pay more attention to tempo and construction, but to write scripts without any Long Shots, Close Ups or other esoteric camera instructions, and he was adjured to investigate his subjects more closely, to consult more people, to think more carefully about this, to examine that more fully, to give more attention to the other, and simultaneously to reduce both his costs and his production time very considerably or else!

All this the professional film maker bore calmly, especially as his self-respect had been judiciously restored by the exhibition of *Artificial Insemination*, but his patience and good temper finally broke when someone implied that after finishing shooting on *Sex in the Sun* on a Friday he turns briskly to his unit and says through a Sol Hogwasch megaphone, 'OK boys, Monday we go to town on *Parasites of the Uterus in the Ruminant Ovis Aries*.' At this point a number of professional film makers very rudely shouted out 'Nonsense!'; they now wish to apologize to the Chairman for a breach of good manners which was only committed under extreme provocation.

The professional film-maker again began to utter short sharp yelps of agony at the news that he wastes far too much time on location waiting for perfect lighting conditions. The writer has just (January, 1948) spent two weeks (and expects to spend several more weeks) waiting on location for the right weather conditions to shoot a film sequence. Every day he and his unit leave London far too early in the morning in order to arrive in a part of the country which they heartily dislike by ten o'clock, when the sun might conceivably be shining. As it is not shining they wait, in a rather cold Nissen hut, sitting on hard wooden boxes, with the general noise at a higher level than they can comfortably tolerate, till three-thirty, when the sun can be presumed to have set. Then they return, and do it all over again next day. Occasionally they get a shot, but only by being all ready to get going as soon as a fair cloud-break appears. They cannot go far away from the Nissen hut in case of a sudden change in the prevailing gloom. They are browned off. They are not doing this for fun, from perversity, nor to put the costs of the film up artificially. They actively dislike doing it. But they have learned by dire experience that if they shot in the wrong conditions they will not make a satisfactory film. Their sense of professional responsibility keeps them waiting. They would not waste time boringly on location, when they might be doing something interesting elsewhere, without a very good reason, and nor would any other unit.

A speaker at the Conference alleged that film could be of little use in agricultural research, since phenomena recorded on film could not be accurately measured. He spoke without the facts. As long ago as 1936 the bouncing qualities of steel ball-bearings were being accurately measured (as part of a routine sampling) by slow motion cinematography and subsequent frame-by-frame analysis. The sideways movement of a railway coach wheel on the rail at various train speeds and at various stages of the life of the wheel were filmed and thus accurately measured and compared at about the same date. In both these cases no other suitable technique presented itself, and the investigations could not have proceeded without the use of cinematography. More recently, and especially during the war, motion picture techniques have been widely adapted to research into physical and engineering problems. There is no reason to suppose that these techniques are inherently unsuited to agricultural research.

The view that there is no place for the non-professional film-maker is, of course, untenable, but it is interesting to note that when films of a technical or instructional character are open to criticism, it is generally found that they fail in one or more of three respects; either they do not say the right things, or they try to say unfilmic things, or they fail in clarity of exposition, either by word or picture. All these kinos of failure are due not to too much professionalism, but rather to insufficient professionalism in investigation and production.

Edgar Anstey gave great satisfaction with his defence of the professional production of the kinds of film needed in agriculture. His cutting room, with moviolas, film bins, strips of film and re-winds was a masterly piece of description. A pity, perhaps, that it contained no human occupant; that harassed looking character in a pullover, the editor, had presumably crept out for a quiet dig at his allotment.

So the professional film-maker, having had a quiet dig at the Conference, must now creep back to his location, first expressing warm thanks to SFA for a stimulating and excellently provisioned day.

BASIL WRIGHT

CLOSE-UP

IT IS now 18 or 19 years since young Basil Charles Wright arrived in our then slender midst, with a great family tradition of liberalism, a classical degree from Cambridge, and two exercises in film which derived from neither. The first was a study in nudity and popped back and forward between diving boards and water splashes in a manner then greatly affected by the discards from the Cambridge Football Fifteen. The second was about a haggard young character who threw himself about from chair to chair, gazed periodically at the rain in the window, then spread red-currant jelly all over his face so that he could more realistically commit suicide under a bus in front of the National Gallery.

Both efforts were so delightful that Basil Wright was (*a*) given two prizes for enthusiasm, and (*b*) put to honest work at 25*s*. a week. For a period thereafter he concentrated on Canadian apples and Burma teak in 500-feet lengths, presumably in preparation for a career in the City. He thereby so gained the habit of brevity that, invited on one momentous occasion to re-cut a feature, he promptly shortened it to a rather bad one-reeler.

John Taylor, who was about 7 at the time and pushing the EMB barrow from door to door, in shorts and school cap of questionable origin, continues the narrative. 'Young Bas,' he says 'then started out on the next stage as Director-Cameraman,' and I quote. This, one remembers, was a film originally called *Shepherd's Spring* which was a good title, only Box Office reared its caliban head and called it *O'er Hill and Dale*. What happened was that B. W. listened to a certain great shepherd called Martin in a pub in Hawick, Scotland, took quiet and gentle account of his betters, as is his genius, and made one of the nicest things done in these days, in the matter of a week. It is quite certain that Martin, like that other great man Chaplin, produced, directed and acted the film, but our Basil was the boy who was there. He was then rightly heralded as the most promising poet in the group. This aesthetic demonstration cost £120 and it made ten times its money with a musical fol-de-rol attached, to make you weep. A recent film on the same subject which cost probably twenty times as much, did not know what it was about when it came to the cloud shadows hurrying across the hills, and this may be because it did not have Basil or, especially, Martin. This, however, is the merest guess. To be young, and good, and humble, and search instinctively and confidently for the qualities we once saw in the poetry books, seems to become increasingly difficult. Is it conservatism? Is it socialism? I never know.

At this point, our character had, so to speak, proved himself. He was the cheapest director around and so proud of it that on an unaccompanied trip to the West Indies he made six films—*Windmill in Barbados*, *Cargo from Jamaica*, etc, etc.—on a negative allowance of rather less than two to one. The net affect of this was to give his producers false ideas of his powers ever afterwards. The economy of his vision they took for granted; the luxury of exotic habits incidentally acquired was something else again. The more serious issue came to a head in the publication of the only great work on Rum Swizzles ever presented to Alcoholics Anonymous, and the organization of the best party between the wildish 90's and Princess Elizabeth's wedding. His closer friends avoided it but stayed on the telephone with strong police contingents nearby to be rushed to the spot in case of necessity.

In some manner or other he sandwiched into these looser days a quiet little film about the country coming to town and took it so seriously that he acquired a claypit in Essex and started the impossible task of turning it into an exercise in horticulture.

Song of Ceylon came in here and it is a curious story. It was not invented, as some say, because of Gervais Huxley's Ceylon Tea Propaganda Board. It was invented because John Taylor had

M. A.

gone off with Robert O'Flaherty, the well-known descendant of the God-save-us-from-the Accursed O'Flaherties, on a two-year holiday in Aran, to say the least, had gone native. Like the first Russian Ambassador to the Court of St James's, he was dropping £5 notes and other sundries indiscriminately. His hair was long to his shoulders. He had achieved in Aran the slap-happy state of total emancipation. Some of us felt that a visit to the Orient was called for, where the influence of O'Flaherty, Pat Mullen and Tiger King, might be countered, if only a trifle, by contact with the Sahibs east of Suez. Personnel management was more or less at its best in these days. Wright was sent along to do something about the Buddha on the side.

B.W. took *Song of Ceylon* so seriously that one doubts if a director ever went on a journey better equipped in knowledge of the region he was to visit, and from the deeps. A dozen others helped him on his return, and particularly Walter Leigh and Cavalcanti, but the man who knew about the drums from the beginning and reached into a sense of this other people, was this liberal scion of a liberal family, making poetry out of his liberalism. It was nice to see, and maybe many more things should happen that way out of the blood and basic. When this writer thinks of *Song of Ceylon* it is not for the pieces of sound experiment but for the other-world quality achieved by a young man who gave himself up to his subject. Incidentally, *Song of Ceylon* was one of the few films ever made without thought of the audience. We said for once the hell with the audience, let the bastards wait even if the shot is 175 feet long and prayer in any case should be sweet and slow. It was, in the highest sense, a personal film. In the meantime one should add, John Taylor fulfilled the actual contract with the Tea Propaganda Board, tuxedo and all, and disappeared to a university somewhere to polish up his Irish. It was quite the prettiest combination of talents while it lasted.

Here, he takes over the story himself. 'By now, Wright was Senior Director. The Unit, renamed the GPO Film Unit, had been growing and Wright had to take over some of the production and administration work. Documentary extended every year of its first fifteen years and someone had to help train new people, start new Units, produce, dig up films, and all the other thankless jobs. This, of course, was the end of many of the best of the directors. Nearly always it was the same story. A director would do some production work, but would make one or two films a year. In the end they always became so involved on the production side that direct film-making became impossible.'

This is true enough. Wright, Legg, Rotha and half a dozen others were prevailed upon in one measure or other to give up their own film-making so that a new generation of film makers might have service and guidance. Wright was the first of the sacrifices and, with his immensely immediate sense of film and film-making, it was almost in the nature of a personal hurt. His co-operation at this strategic moment in the development of the documentary film should be the more warmly noted for what it represented in service to others than himself. It is now commonly allowed that he is one of the best producers in the group as he is certainly one of the most tutored in public service and one of the most sensible in common council, but those who know him know also that he could cut the pants off any cutter in the business, and feel and see the memorable image as few are born to do. The script of *Night Mail* was Wright's, though the shooting detail of Watt was out of his rough, rich self, and the cutting was Wright's though Cavalcanti in a burst of inventive quality gave it its sound line. It was perhaps Wright's last outing as Jimmy the One on the fo'c'sle head.

John Taylor goes on, 'He was Studio Manager at Blackheath, he started Realist—he ran Film Centre—he was producer at Crown—adviser to the MOI—started International Realist—and in the meantime had a hundred and one odd but necessary jobs. He served on Quota Committees—was a member of ASFP—financed *World Film News*—and edited *DNL*. He promoted hundreds of films and produced and advised possibly on a thousand. He lectured, wrote criticisms for several papers, and served on scores of organizations and committees.

'Unfortunately for Wright, he was the most successful of the documentary producers. It was not only that he produced many of the best films such as *Men of Africa*, *Children at School*, *Face of Scotland*, *The Harvest Shall Come*, *Neuro-psychiatry*, *Diary for Timothy* and *Children on Trial*, but, for some unknown reason, he was trusted and confided in by all and sundry. The sponsors trusted him—the units—the producers and the technicians—everyone was willing to take his word.

n the middle of a violent dispute between bits of documentary, you would find that h sides were consulting him, even if he was tisan. If someone had a nervous breakdown, in debt, or his wife was leaving him, it was ays Uncle Bas who was rung up to advise the doctor, arrange a loan, or go and get the back. There is no overdrawing of the strange ues of Uncle Bas,' concludes John Taylor.

ut this, this other observer says, was plain ugh to see and why. Wright is a born artist, he was born also into a tradition of public ice and, like so many others of his kind, he sacrificed art, which must for ever be in some ree selfish, for the other and Roman order. ether it is right to do so, anyone can speculate upon. There, I say, goes a very perfect gentle knight, as gentle as one knows.

Today, Wright continues in the quiet habits of liking concerts and the ballet, and reading immensely and in the classical manner; he still persistently and impossibly digs in his Essex claypit; he is grey as he should not be, but has a capacity for going dark again when he feels good; he has stooped shoulders but will straighten himself miraculously if he finds his old fine wit flashing again; he slopes over bars ordinarily, but in Paris, of all places, lives like a monk. He is, in fact, at 40, going through the difficult period of deciding whether to grow old or young again; and one would suspect, and this for the better, that he is a little weary of well-doing. He is incidentally one of the few amongst us who can afford the luxury of giving some time to the dilemma.

Wright today can have pretty well anything he likes on the public service side of documentary in the UN, in the British Government service, or elsewhere. He has acquired all the talents and training for the desks of responsibility. On the other hand, one suspects there was something we did not make over when we turned him into a producer. If the original, and native, and highly personal talent spurts again, he would be the best directorial bet in the business. This is one bet placed that Basil Charles Wright will, after long years, be out on location again with the spring. G

RIERSON TO REVIEW BOARD *(Continued from page 28)*

mation sheet and give that a kicking around tead? Is it maybe that you just don't like nada or something? Forgive me if, liking nada very much in general and Montreal in ticular, I say that 'this modest little film' has very nice music track with some pleasant tches of French-Canadian music and not st the snatch from *La Claire Fontaine*. Per- me to say that whatever the blurb says— they do, you know, everywhere in the world he film itself is modest in tone and, except ybe for the little French-Canadian girl who ns too much, and I never liked these loving ples wandering through films anyway, it is a which makes you feel warm about one of warmest cities in the world.

And lastly, as to *Condition Improved*. This, my mind, is a good clear unpretentious re- t, where the film producers have quite tly not tried to put their techniques, or atever you call them, between their sub- and the functional exposition of occupa- nal therapy which they were asked for.

t seems to me not very useful to condemn lm for not doing what it was never designed do. It was supposed to be a general intro- ction to occupational therapy with a wide ge of examples in the different fields of atment, and I think it is, with the exception the psychiatric sequence which seems to ve been butchered somewhere along the e. It is true that the material is sufficient a dozen or more detailed films, but it is ictly as a general introduction that this film sents itself. The fact of the matter, I am ured, is that the film has done its job and been well received by audiences of doc- s, nurses and relatives of patients for whom was intended.

What all this amounts to is not that every- ng from Canada is good. I love Canada rly but, in some respects, it is not good at all. ay this just to demonstrate that I can be as ffy a character as your composite self in tain matters Canadian.

I have the impression, for instance, that nada is not very knowledgeable about poli- l philosophy or the law, especially in the her branches of these disciplines, though the other hand it is enormously good at nomics. It is somewhat crude in parlia- ntary debate and there are more cockerels wing on local editorial dunghills than you ld conceive outside Lilliput, but on the er hand, it has a remarkable Institute of International Affairs and solid groups of political study in every town in the country.

Its public life lacks courage and Canada is the village that voted the earth was flat, in the denial of its size and destiny. Yet, its carelessness of distance is fantastic and its individual adventures into the Arctic, epic. Its educational standards are in many quarters grotesque and, in some quarters, subject to a species of provincial fascism which is both ignorant and vicious. Yet, the library work, the adult educational developments and the extension services of the voluntary associations are heartening and good.

Canada, especially, can be a great bore when it tries to match its sophistication with the larger and deeper versions thereof. 'Sunset, and evening star and one clear call for Bill the lone fisherman.' But over and under these variations and anomalies, there is a profound element of common sense and good taste about Canada and Canadian life which is a precious thing to know.

This the Film Board reflects and demonstrates. It is a relatively young unit. Its style is based on a policy of doing a large number of jobs with the money it has and they are all, except for the work of Norman McLaren's experimental unit, practical jobs fitted to a particular need and a particular audience. In its effort to do as many jobs as possible, it does not spend nearly as much money on a film as we do in Britain.

Inevitably and for these reasons, its style is a reportage style which avoids the larger flights, though indeed the quality of reportage camera work, the development of editorial economy and pace, and the creative use of music and sound represent valuable and certain progress. The larger flights I am sure will come and all the more surely now that so many have learned that the first thing first is to handle a narrative. I even believe, as I watch some of the more complex approaches to documentary, that it might be better if many others followed the Canadian example for the simple.

Whatever you say of the Canadian films, they are seen everywhere in Canada, are part of the life of the nation; and the people who make them are happy in a sense of public service recognized, and there is none of that sense of frustration of which one hears so much complaint in England. It may be that, now and again, they are a trifle too simple, but surely the exchange of personnel to and from Europe —not to mention a more thoughtful criticism on the part of *DFN*—would soon cure that.

If you think that, out of personal affection and regard, I am prejudiced, be sure I am. But if you want to make anything of it, at least you won't find me a composite individual to go after. I am at your service.

JOHN GRIERSON

FILMS OF THE MONTH

(*Cont. from page* 31)

relations between employee and employer, and so on—in fact the film skirts the battleground of social progress. On the whole, that criticism, while indicating a real gap in the subject-matter, would be unfair, for the film gives the appearance of being first and foremost concerned with the description of an age-old exercise of a skill, and it is some measure of its success that it manages to do this in such glowing human terms that we miss the fuller study. That it also manages to include by implication such things as a mild condemnation of the older types of furnaces which pollute the air of the towns with their belching smoke, and to invest a more progressive works like Wedgwoods with a greater air of spaciousness and mechanical efficiency, is perhaps all we can expect from what is so much a process film.

A fairer criticism, taking the film at its face-value, would be of a weakness in the story of the family (centring round the son and his fiancée), which lacks precision in its later development. In their story, there is no compensating peak to match the careful unfolding of the pottery processes.

However, a film with such a desirable accent on the human being and his acquired skill, and bearing so much of interest, merits the widest showing in cinemas and outside them; not only because it is a satisfying piece of film-making, but also because it captures in a kindly way the daily work of men and women engaged in one of our most intriguing and famous industries.

VISUAL UNITS

SIR: Here is some information that Joan couldn't give Marjorie in her charming letter in your January issue. The Visual Unit *Water Supply* in its entirety cost £6,393 to produce. The COI man is now quite sure.

Yours sincerely,

DENIS FORMAN

Films Division, COI

CORRESPONDENCE

Trade Unions—from Ralph Bond

SIR: It is good to know that the views expressed by Ken Cameron in your latest issue 'do not necessarily coincide with those of the Editorial Board'. Ken, if he will forgive my saying so, has indulged his imaginary grievances against ACT in a manner that does no credit to his customary scientific thinking.

He says that ACT has failed to keep its membership (1) well looked after and (2) united. As to (1), he quickly contradicts himself by announcing that ACT has done 'work of inestimable value' and that 'salary rates and working conditions have reached levels undreamt of before the war', so I'll leave it at that.

As regards keeping the members united, few will dispute that ACT has successfully created a Trade Union uniting studio technicians, documentary technicians, laboratory and news reel technicians—to say nothing of technicians in television, cartoon animation and still-strip companies, stock manufacturing companies, like Kodak, and equipment companies, like British Acoustic. All sections have their own particular problems; all have found that they have been well served within the very broad and democratic structure of the Union.

Ken Cameron charges ACT with obstructionism, but produces no single instance, unless it is his complaint that an enthusiastic technician cannot work all night long if the spirit moves him. This old tale has been trotted out for years. It's the excuse for every Union-buster in the country and the same argument could equally apply against trade unionism in the mines or in transport, or any other industry. I don't suppose anyone at Crown will object if Ken's spirit moves him to work all night but the local ACT Committee would, quite rightly, have something to say if his spirit required the presence of numerous other technicians who might reasonably prefer to spend a few hours in bed. After all, film making *is* a collective job and a Union is not to be blamed for establishing the greatest good for the greatest number.

I heartily agree with him in asking for members, who disagree with ACT policy, to take a more active attitude. There may be a few autocratic shop stewards; if so, I haven't met them; neither have I met the extremists ' . . . eager to be again everything and everybody' but, if they exist, it's up to the members to take them in hand.

The point—completely ignored by Ken—is that ACT *encourages* such rank and file activity and has constructed machinery which, in my experience, is more democratic from bottom to top than any other Trade Union I know of.

Unsupported accusations, vague generalizations, petty references to 'sheeplike satellites' and petulant innuendoes about 'autocrats' are not going to get anybody anywhere.

ACT has done a big job apart from improving the standards and status of its members. The very Apprenticeship Scheme to which Ken refers has been fought and campaigned for by ACT over many years and has at last secured the support of employers. ACT has given a lead on all questions affecting the health of our industry; its policy has been progressive, democratic and imaginative.

I suggest that Ken Cameron should, as befits a leading and respected technician, pull his weight in ACT in a constructive manner instead of narking at all and sundry.

Yours sincerely,

RALPH BOND

40 *Parliament Hill, NW3*

Ken Cameron Replies

SIR: Ralph Bond has answered me, with flattering promptitude, lucidly and almost convincingly, in the terms one would expect from such an ardent pillar of trade unionism. He has in fact repeated the admirable aims of a well-ordered and well-organized body of workers. But he makes the fundamental mistake of failing to distinguish between theory and practice. He has misread my comments upon the success of ACT as the technicians' fairy godmother. I said very emphatically that I have nothing but praise for so much of the work done in the past. As far as our unity is concerned, certainly ACT has succeeded in binding together technicians of all categories, but they are bound with bonds of inflexible steel, forged by those who prefer to be known as brothers rather than members into something approaching an instrument of social blackmail.

Ralph says that my grievances are imaginary. That is where he is so terribly wrong. They are, it is true, largely indefinable. They are caused by an attitude in the minds of those who at present settle our destiny. There are occasions in every walk of life, and the film business is no exception, when rules and regulations must be interprete with common sense as well as discipline; whe even a little sense of humour—so terribly lackin —could be so vitally useful.

He implies that I am a union-buster becaus I 'trot out' the old case of the technician wh might want to work all night. Does Ralph neve think of his work after six o'clock? Does he neve wake up in the night wondering how on earth h is going to solve some problem that the morrow will bring? If not it's a pretty poor look-out fo World Wide Films.

I see eye to eye with Ralph on so much that h has said. It is what he has ignored—perhaps eve does not know, although that is hard to believe— that gives me cause for worry. Nor only to me because I know that I am far from alone in m opinions. We can all see if we only look in th right direction the number of man-hours waste through union officials holding meetings to solv problems which would not even exist if they sim ply concentrated on the jobs for which they ar paid.

He suggests that I pull my weight in ACT, an not nark at all and sundry. Is ACT so perfec that it defies criticism? Or does it just resent it I am not narking at all and sundry. I am simply trying to have a crack at the minority who mistake the shadow for the substance.

KEN CAMERON

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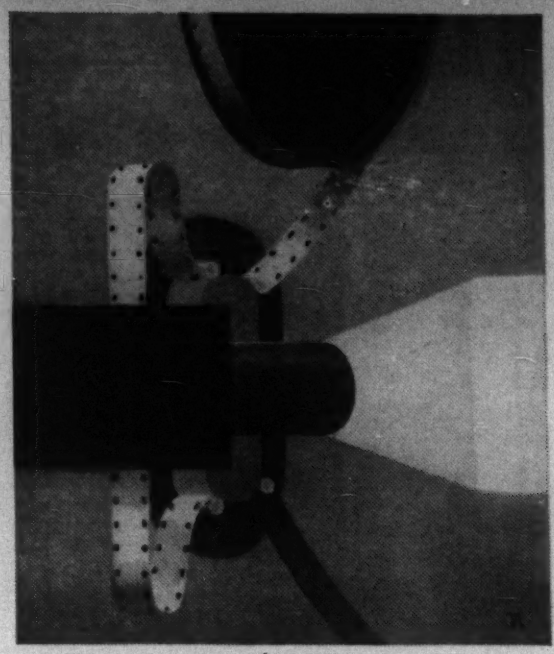

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